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Reaction

The reactions that other people have to my deformity are many and varied. From pointedly ignoring it to a nervous almost obsessive need to know all about it. People often just blurt out the question "What happened to you?" This is usually said in front of other people so that all of them then will turn and look. Then with everyone looking or at least listening comes the other personal questions such as "Are you a Thalidomide baby?" "Do you have ten toes?" Then the aren't you wonderful exclamations come pouring out. "You people are so wonderful living your lives as best you can. Why I don't know how you do it!" Women, well meaning, and kind women usually say these things.

Men just never ask about it. Well almost never. Just last Monday after leaving this class I bought dinner at a Deli. The man behind the counter leaned over to me and asked, "What happened to you?" I couldn't help myself. I laughed out loud. I had been thinking about this very assignment, about people and their reactions to me. I explained as I usually do in a way to put him at ease.

This encounter, as mild as it was started me thinking about men, a topic often on my mind. When do men ask? Mostly men don't ask. But when they do it is because they feel comfortable around me. And when is that you may ask? Well, when I've made them comfortable is when!

How accepting are gay men of my deformity, of my being different? Not very. Sure there are those who do accept the difference and move on to relating to me as another gay man. But the majority just ignores my existence. A few have actually gone out of their way to let me know they were repulsed by me. Once I was in a bar having a drink. A man came over to me and introduced himself. I reached out to shake his hand and he squealed, looked bug-eyed at my hand and ran from me. Another time a man I thought was a friend, a man who knew I was deformed, a man I had known for months, a man I had slept with told me that the night we met he was a little drunk. He said the bar was dark and if he had seen my hands first he would never have become my friend!

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